



# affirmation

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## Immigrant women

by Leslie Blake-Côté



Wendy Ho has been living in Canada for five years now, and, for the last four-and-a-half years, has worked as a chambermaid at Toronto's Royal York Hotel. However, in order to communicate in English she still needs an interpreter. She admits to feeling 'sad and lonely because I can't talk to people in Canada; in China I can.'

Wendy's case is not unusual. In fact, it's typical of immigrant women who come to Canada. It is devastating for them and particularly problematic when they're in the workplace. And it's a situation that women's groups and employers are trying to remedy.

*A Report of the Joint Task Force on Immigrant Women*, published in 1979, points out the problems resulting from this lack of English.

The women, it says, lack knowledge

of their rights and are subject to exploitation in the workplace and poor working conditions. Another concern is that this lack of English lands them in job ghettos.

Tania DasGupta, executive member of Women Working With Immigrant Women, shares this concern. 'These women end up in dead-end jobs in the garment and textile industries, in the food industry (restaurants and factories), in cleaning jobs and as domestics. What's even more

*Immigrant women attending an English course at their workplace. Management sees this kind of provision as a long-term investment.*

frustrating,' says DasGupta, 'is that without English they can't take advantage of other training programs, which perpetuates the cycle.'

'Another problem is that these women are more easily victims of racial and sexual harassment by employers,' adds DasGupta. 'They are afraid to complain because they fear losing their jobs and being deported.'

What's also demoralizing is that a number of these women had good jobs where they came from. Wendy Ho was a bookkeeper in China, where her friend, Jane Ng, who interpreted for her, was an English

teacher. Says Ng, also a chambermaid at the Royal York Hotel, 'Here we use our labour; there (China) we used our mentality and our thought.'

The report goes on to point out that one of the reasons these women lack English is that they immigrate under the family class category, not as workers, and therefore are not eligible for intensive language training, which is reserved for the breadwinner. Even if these women do enter the labour force and decide to take English courses after work, they're usually exhausted at the end of the day, have more work and children waiting at home and lack the money for the courses.

So the task force recommended that these classes be given by employers during working hours. And, in fact, there are a number of companies providing such classes. Wendy Ho has just been involved in the first such course sponsored by the Royal York Hotel in Toronto.

Another company providing English in the workplace is Magna International Inc. Twelve women have just completed the company's first program in Magna's London, Ontario plant, and management is pleased with the results. Plant manager Kent Hansen recognizes a short-term loss of productivity, but sees the long-term investment as important. Says Hansen: 'It helps the people to improve their potential and enjoy what they're doing. For one woman it meant finally being able to talk to her supervisor.'

Thus, some companies have recognized the needs of immigrant women in the workplace and are trying to improve their situations with language classes. However, only when most companies follow this lead will these women begin to experience full integration into Canadian society.

*Ms. Blake-Côté is an Ontario Human Rights Commissioner.*

## Important board decision—insurance industry and young single male drivers

by Christine Silversides

In the recent board of inquiry decision in *OHRC and Michael G. Bates v. Zurich Insurance Company of Canada*, Professor Frederick H. Zemans examined the legality of the insurance industry's rate classification system, which uses such factors as age, sex and marital status to determine car insurance premium rates.

The case before the board concerned Michael Bates, a 20 year-old single man who had had no driving accidents and had never received any

demerit points, yet who was informed by Zurich Insurance Company that he must pay higher rates than those paid by women, married men of his age and single men who were 25 years of age or older.

Counsel for both Zurich and Michael Bates agreed that a *prima facie* case of discrimination had been established—that is, that premium rate differentiation was based on factors prohibited under the *Human Rights Code*. Thus, the only issue

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*The chairman of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, Canon Borden Purcell, enjoyed excellent discussions with Mr. Harry Gairey, prominent and much honoured 'patriarch' of the black community, at the CNE multicultural luncheon.*



# De-mythologizing affirmative action

by Christine Silversides

In a recently released study, 'Equity in the Labour Market: The Potential of Affirmative Action', commissioned by Judge Rosalie Abella, D. Rhys Phillips examines the potential of affirmative action to ensure both employment equity in the labour market and improved efficiency in the economy as a whole. He describes early assumptions, which held that employment problems based on unintentional bias were due to the individual rather than social or labour market barriers. The emphasis was therefore placed on programs to increase the individual's 'human capital'. More recently, however, it has become clear that the problem may lie in those employment systems that fail to reward skills or attributes already held by the individual.

Phillips's study illustrates that, far from being a radical departure from business practice, affirmative action uses 'standard problem-solving techniques to identify and remove barriers.' Instead of the traditional emphasis on changing attitudes toward target groups, emphasis is placed on changing corporate or organizational behaviour. This new focus, Phillips argues, will build on and reinforce the norms of good business practice, while the ongoing positive experience of integrating and working with qualified target group members will eventually result in decided changes in attitude.

The requirement for effective action to remove employment discrimination springs from two distinct, but practically inseparable, needs. The first is based on equity and public policy—that is, to correct past wrongs and to prevent their recurrence. The second is to enhance the economic well-being of Canada by ensuring efficient human resource utilization. The two needs are mutually supporting: 'Economic growth depends on the social justice of bringing into the labour force those groups that have been excluded from it and permitting the fullest use of the skills and abilities of those who have been unreasonably restricted in their employment opportunities.'

The author stresses that affirmative action is not a 'rigid model'. It differs according to the nature of the organization, its rates of growth and turnover, the demographic make-up of its recruitment area and its skill requirements as well as the sophistication of its planning capability, its corporate climate and the availability of resources.

The study outlines four basic steps for the development and implementation of an effective employment equity plan. The first is a planning stage, which lays a firm base for program success. This includes establishing senior level commitment as well as the consolidation of management support at all levels. A senior executive is appointed to oversee and assume accountability for the corporation's objective, a shared problem-solving approach is established and appropriate resources are assigned.

Phillips describes the second step as a 'problem identification stage',

which includes an analysis for cause and validity, that is, an analysis of the business necessity of any practices producing problematic results.

In step three, the employment equity program is planned. Goals and timetables are developed, discriminatory practices are replaced with alternative non-discriminatory, or 'neutral', systems, special measures are implemented to remedy the effects of past discrimination and an effective ongoing monitoring system is set up. Finally, an implementation strategy is carefully developed to ensure the maximization of co-operation and the minimization of conflict.

Implementing the carefully structured employment equity plan concludes the process. Phillips points to an implementation strategy that includes periodic formal reports tabled at senior management meetings, governing boards or, in small companies, with the company president, as well as periodic reports on the program circulated throughout the organization. The plan envisions individual feedback provided to department heads through meetings to review annual goals, and through documentation of results in departmental reviews. Meetings can be used to provide assistance in redefining goals or in taking corrective action where goals are not being met.

Phillips is quick to point out, however, that the actual implementation of the plan will be less precise since changes in systems will often result as problems are identified, and management competition to show results will surface once senior management commitment becomes pronounced.

The next decade will see many changes in the economic system, Phillips says. It is now clear that the use of employment equity programs can not only be part of a responsive, technically sophisticated economic system but also ensure that future change will further the principles of social justice and economic equity.

*Christine Silversides is a student at Osgoode Hall Law School, York University, who worked with the commission during the summer of 1985.*

## Too old to dive

The complainant, a 52-year-old deep sea diver, was dismissed after his company substantially changed management. When the complainant questioned his dive superintendent about his dismissal, he was told: 'We are using mixed gas and that will be too hard for your body. It's my idea and I'm going to go with the youth.' Aware that his company was interviewing for captains of dive boats, and since he was qualified and held his 'Master's Ticket', the complainant asked that he be considered for one of these positions. His request was refused.

The respondent company felt the complainant was unable to maintain a working relationship with co-workers. In view of the co-operative nature of the profession, they felt that his termination was necessary to

Young male drivers  
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A happy Michael Bates cheers his victory after board of inquiry decision was handed down.

that remained to be argued was whether Zurich's rate classification system fell within the parameters of s. 21 of the Code. This section allows insurance companies to differentiate on prohibited grounds if the differentiation is 'reasonable and bona fide.'

In the decision, Professor Zemans looked to the *Etobicoke* case, a 1982 decision of the Supreme Court of Canada, which dealt with a limited exception to a general prohibition against discrimination. In *Etobicoke*, it was established that when interpreting and applying the exceptions contained within the Code, recognition should be given to the Code's basic purpose, which, as stated in the preamble, is to recognize the inherent dignity and rights of each individual. Consistent with this view, Professor Zemans stated in *Zurich* that 'Persons in this province, then, should be dealt with and assessed, as far as possible, on an individual basis, without regard to stereotypical group characteristics.' Thus, just as employers are required to demonstrate that limitations that discriminate on the basis of group characteristics are reasonably necessary to the safe, efficient and economic performance of the job, so, too, insurers must show that discriminatory rate classification systems are reasonably necessary to ensure the efficient operation of the insurance system.

With regard to what is 'reasonably

necessary' for industry efficiency, Professor Zemans held that *there must be a factual basis* for the use of the classification system; that is, the discriminatory group factors used must be causally connected to the risk undertaken by automobile insurers.

In its application of this standard, the board held that although Zurich submitted that unmarried people, males and the general category of under-25s are, in fact, a higher risk, there was no scientific evidence of a direct causal relationship between the risk and the rate categories used. 'The distinction,' Professor Zemans noted, 'appears to be based on little more than historical accidents.' He emphasized that the insurance industry cannot rely on 30 years of tradition to support a discriminatory rate classification system.

Looking to the degree of reasonableness necessary, the board noted the general rule that exceptions to the prohibitions against discrimination in human rights legislation should be narrowly construed. More specifically, Zurich must establish that the very essence of its business would be undermined if it could no longer rely on discriminatory group characteristics. The board found that Zurich did not demonstrate that the abandonment of the present categories would undermine the very essence of its business. In fact, it was pointed out by counsel for the commission that there is an alternative to the system, which is presently in use for those drivers over the age of 25 years. For these drivers, the industry relies solely on factors that are causally connected and non-discriminatory, such as driving record, driving experience and vehicle use, to establish the premium rates charged.

Professor Zemans therefore concluded that although the insurance industry has acted in good faith (having developed its present system for business and economic reasons), 'the current automobile driver classifications of unmarried male drivers under 25 contravene the Code' and that the present rate classifications are not based on 'reasonable and bona fide' grounds.

The decision has been appealed.

*Christine Silversides is a student at Osgoode Hall Law School, York University, who worked with the commission during the summer of 1985.*

promote safe and efficient diving operations.

During extended investigation, 18 people were interviewed, including managers, co-workers and support staff. It was established that previous management had been in economic difficulty and the new management seemed to believe that younger divers would help make the company a more viable one. It was also established that, although the complainant was, at times, a difficult man to work with, he was a respected diver and in excellent health.

The complainant was not interested in continuing employment, and the respondent company agreed to pay him \$5,000 to cover lost wages and

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## Editorial

### The Christmas Season

Christmas is a wonderful time of year; it casts its spell over all of us regardless of what background we might hail from. Yet it is important to remember that the warm and loving feeling that lies at the basis of the celebration is essentially of a religious nature and that this aspect is not shared by everyone. While Canada was once a fairly homogeneous community in a broad religious sense, it no longer is. There are now many citizens who have never read a page of the Bible, whose religious traditions are rooted in Eastern scriptures or who have no religious belief at all. We need to

know that these different groups exist amongst us and that they, too, warrant appreciation.

Because Jews have been in Canada for a very long time, the fact that Chanukah occurs at this season of the year has entered the realm of common knowledge; but other religious cultures have not yet made their mark. In time, they will and must, for to know of them as part of the Canadian fabric enriches all of us.

Meanwhile, the Christmas season is here—ample reason to wish our readers a panoply of blessings.

## A common misconception

The Zurich Insurance case (see page 1 of this issue of *Affirmation*) has been widely discussed by the media.

As readers of *Affirmation* know, of course, Professor Zemans is not 'the commission', nor is he its chairman. He was acting as an independent board of inquiry appointed not by the commission but by the Minister of Labour, who chose his name from a panel of independent legal experts. To be sure, the Ontario Human Rights Commission had previously agreed that the 20-year-old young man had been discriminated against by the insurance company and that the complaint was justified. Consequently, the commission asked that a

board of inquiry be established to hear the case. The resulting ruling was made by the *independent* board of inquiry, which had no connection with the commission. Yet, both in the electronic and print media, it was stated that 'the commission' had ruled in the matter. No distinction was made between it and the board of inquiry.

While we hardly need to point this out to readers of *Affirmation*, it is important that, whenever possible, and as often as necessary, the process under which the Ontario Human Rights Commission operates be made clear.

## Meeting our new commissioner

John Bennett

'Working with the Human Rights Commission is fascinating,' says John Bennett. 'I'm extremely impressed with the dedication of the entire staff.'

Mr. Bennett was appointed to the commission for a three-year term in February 1985. And although he lives in Sault Ste. Marie, he says he has no reservations about travelling to Toronto to work with such a conscientious and hard-working group of people.

He has been employed by Algoma Steel for over 30 years and is a member of the United Steelworkers of America. Thus, Mr. Bennett is able to understand and represent the interests of the labour force in Ontario.

Within the union he is the Chairman of Education/Public Relations, is involved in many union-related activities and holds the position of assistant editor of the *Unionist*. For four years he hosted a union-sponsored television program called 'Cinema Saturday Night'.



'We were pioneers, in a sense, with this show,' explains Mr. Bennett. 'We would run big-name movies with no commercial breaks.'

After the movie, a half-hour was slotted for interviews and panel discussions, during which, community and union topics were examined.

Mr. Bennett is also extensively involved in civic work in and around the Sault Ste. Marie area. He is currently on the board of trustees of the United Way, and has participated in many campaigns for the organization.

Another important project of Mr. Bennett's is the merging of two major hospitals in Sault Ste. Marie. He and

## Chairman's corner



December 10, 1985 is International Human Rights Day and the 37th anniversary of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Declaration, an incentive for moving nations of the world toward more humane and decent treatment of their inhabitants, proclaims that the recognition of the inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.

This year is also the 40th anniversary of the United Nations. Since its inception, numerous Conventions and activities have demonstrated its commitment to the protection and furtherance of human rights. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its Optional Protocol were adopted by the UN General Assembly on December 16, 1966, binding all signatory nations to recognize fundamental human rights and to work toward equality of opportunity for all.

In its efforts to attack racial discrimination, the General Assembly adopted, in December 1965, the International Convention of the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, in which signatory nations agreed to work toward reducing racial intolerance and discrimination and to make periodic reports to a committee of the General Assembly on activities and progress. In the past two decades these agreements have inspired considerable domestic activity and plans of action aimed at achieving racial equality.

The UN has made, and continues to make, efforts to recognize the rights of women in society and to promote equality of opportunity for them. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, which came into force in September 1981, obliged all signatory countries to submit regular reports outlining the states' efforts to improve the position of women in society. With the Decade of Women, 1975-1985, coming to a close this

year, member nations met at the Nairobi Conference to review the progress made in the past 10 years, identify areas where more work is needed, exchange information and develop effective plans of action for the future.

In Ontario, the *Human Rights Code* draws its inspiration from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The aim of the Code is to create, at the community level, a climate of understanding and mutual respect in which all people will be made to feel equal in dignity and rights, that each is a part of the Canadian community and that each has a rich contribution to make to the development and well-being of our province and nation.

While Canada has shown its commitment to human rights through ratification of international covenants and the enactment and vigorous enforcement of human rights legislation, we must demand that other nations also live up to their obligations in the human rights field. This view has been eloquently expressed by Stephen Lewis, Canada's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations. Speaking for all Canadians, Mr. Lewis, in statements to the General Assembly, has spoken out against human rights violations in various nations. He has described the South African government's policy of apartheid as 'an unconscionable violation of fundamental human rights,' calling on member nations to 'keep the pressure inexorably on... until every person in South Africa enjoys full and equal rights.'

During a recent Federal-Provincial-Territorial Conference for Ministers Responsible for Human Rights, the ministers restated the commitment of all governments in Canada to support the United Nations as a forum for the development of peace and progress for all peoples in a climate conducive to the practical enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Beyond the initiatives taken by our government representatives, we, the Canadian people, can make valuable contributions to the advancement of civil and political freedoms abroad by speaking out, endorsing our government's position, supporting human rights initiatives in other countries and doing our utmost to increase general public awareness and concern. Let us use the opportunity presented by the 40th anniversary to demonstrate that the 'Canadian government and the Canadian people stand ready to help' to promote human rights at home and abroad.

a group of others are attempting to create a central corps that will combine many of the services essential to both hospitals.

'We are trying to create a one-hospital situation where that is almost impossible,' says Mr. Bennett. 'But if we are successful, it will save money for the community and raise health care to the optimum level.'

Mr. Bennett enjoys spending time with, and takes tremendous pride in,

his wife, Margaret and their five children: Jeffrey, an engineer/physicist with Ontario Hydro, daughter Leslie, who works at the Group Health Centre in Sault Ste. Marie, Mark, a systems engineer with Algoma Steel, Patti, a recent pharmacy graduate who is currently working at the Ottawa Civic Hospital and Craig, who is working on a Master's of Applied Physics at the University of Waterloo.

Welcome aboard, John Bennett!



## Race discrimination—when does it exist?

### First of three parts

by Michael Betcherman

#### The Legislation

Every Canadian jurisdiction has legislation prohibiting employment discrimination on race-related grounds, namely race, colour, national or ethnic origin and ancestry. None of the legislation has defined these grounds and their interpretation has been left to the human rights tribunals.

#### Categories of racial discrimination

Racial discrimination can be separated into three categories:

- ☐ intentional discrimination
- ☐ unequal treatment
- ☐ systemic discrimination

#### Intentional discrimination

Intentional discrimination exists when an employer's practice is deliberately unfair due to prejudice or ill will. For example, an employer who tells a black job applicant that the position is filled and later gives an application form to a white applicant is guilty of intentional discrimination.

#### Unequal treatment

Unequal treatment exists when an employer treats members of one group differently than members of another group under similar circumstances. An example is offering to a black a lower salary than offered to a white when the two applicants apply for the same position.

#### Systemic discrimination\*

Systemic discrimination is the legal term used to describe discrimination which occurs unintentionally as the result of certain employment practices.

An example of systemic discrimination given in an affirmative action manual recently published by the federal government is the requirement of a Grade 10 education for bus drivers. Although there is no intention to discriminate, this requirement in fact would discriminate against some native Indians who are qualified to be bus drivers though they might not have a Grade 10 education.

The studies referred to at the beginning of this article outlined other practices, not yet challenged in the courts, that may contribute to race-related systemic discrimination.

\*Systemic discrimination was discussed in *The Employment Law Report*, vol. 4, no. 2, p.9.

#### Too old to dive continued from page 2

general damages. The respondent also agreed to provide a letter of assurance to the commission, to send a notice of company policy regarding human rights to all employees and to post Code cards.

In recognition of their lack of knowledge in the area of human rights the respondent company registered seven of their personnel for a human rights seminar. The officer suggested looking into the possibility of diving schools being made aware of the *Human Rights Code*. It seemed to be well known that, while in school, young divers are given the impression that a diver is 'over the hill' at 45 years of age.

These are:

- a) The use of personality or aptitude tests for employment or promotion. Research has shown that many of these tests are geared to persons coming from a specific cultural background and that persons from other backgrounds are unlikely to do well on them.
- b) The use of informal recruitment methods such as 'word-of-mouth' and networking. These methods will tend to limit entrance opportunities for certain groups.
- c) A preference for certain manners and attitudes such as a firm handshake and direct eye-contact, which are foreign to certain cultures.
- d) The basing of promotions, layoffs and dismissals on seniority. This will tend to have a discriminatory effect on members of certain race-related groups who are likely to have been more recently hired.

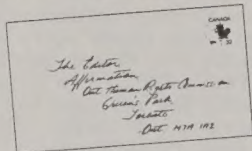
#### The tribunals' general approach to intentional discrimination cases

Tribunals generally realize that it is often a difficult task for a person to prove that he has been discriminated against on race-related grounds. Employers seldom practise discrimination in a blatant, open manner. One board of inquiry has stated, 'Discrimination on the grounds of race or colour is frequently practised in a very subtle manner.' Nevertheless, a person alleging discrimination must present facts which strongly suggest that discrimination has occurred. The employer must then justify his action by proving it was based on legitimate, non-discriminating factors.

The second part of this article will be reprinted in the March 1986 issue of *Affirmation*.

*This article was written by Michael Betcherman, member of the Bar of Ontario. Reprinted from The Employment Law Report, June 1985, with permission of the publisher, Concord Publishing Ltd., Toronto. For further information call Richard Guerrier (416) 964-2758.*

## Our readers write



Dear Dr. Plaut:

I would like to thank you sincerely for the kind remarks concerning my study on the *Rights of Children in Organized Sport*. This study, which covered several years of work, has led me to conclude that when we examine the concept of physical violence in these activities, we are merely looking at the tip of the iceberg. The part that is hidden, usually below the surface, involves the psychological violence through violations of rights and lack of knowledge of the sensitivities and needs of children.

Please find enclosed copies of the original and revised work I did with the Canadian Council On Children And Youth in a related area. Needless to say, we must do something about the physical violence that occurs, which obviously has its psychological ramifications, but we must press on and do something about the non-physical, psychological violence as well.

Sincerely,  
P.J. Galasso, Ph. D.  
Professor,  
University of Windsor

## Successes in the Unit for the Handicapped

by Barbara Justason

The Unit is making major strides in effecting changes to traditional respondent policies and practices when assessing applicants for employment, services, facilities, accommodation and contracts. A complainant was recently denied car insurance because he has cerebral palsy. No investigation was made by the respondent company to assess the complainant on his individual merits. According to the respondents, cerebral palsy represents a physical disability affecting the operation of a vehicle. The respondents then took the position that, pursuant to s 21 of the Code, they could deny insurance coverage to the complainant as his handicap provided a 'reasonable and bona fide' ground for doing so.

The complainant had successfully passed a driver's course, had five years of accident-free driving experience, and had received insurance from other companies at no addi-

tional charge. The only modification made to his car to facilitate his handicap is a knob on his steering wheel. When apprised of these facts, the respondents sent a letter of apology to the complainant and offered to accept his application for car insurance at their standard premiums. The respondents also agreed to change their policy concerning the assessment of applicants with a handicap, namely, that a disability is to be underwritten on an individualized assessment of risk basis rather than on group characteristics.

This is but one of the many cases in which the Unit for the Handicapped successfully administers the Code to protect persons with physical and mental handicaps.

*Ms. Justason is a human rights officer with the Unit for the Handicapped, Ontario Human Rights Commission.*

## Looking into the mirror of time

by W. Gunther Plaut

I have noticed, lately, that I am telling people quite readily how old I am. I suppose, deep down, I want to see their surprise at this extraordinary revelation. 'Really!' I love to hear them say, 'that's incredible. You don't look your age at all.' When this happens, I am elated and slightly depressed at the same time. After all, there are—Shakespeare notwithstanding—only three basic ages: youth, middle-age and 'My, you look good.'

The truth is, the older I get the more aware I am that, while the numbers add up, my own feelings about myself haven't changed much at all. I run more slowly and sleep more than I used to. My face and hair (or rather the lack of it) betray the onrush of years, but my thinking is clearer and my imagination (I'd like to think) is more fertile. Of course, that lays me open to the retort that before, I obviously must have been a muddle-head who never had a thought of his own. Still, being happy with oneself is half of life's battle, and age—if one is lucky—is a bonus and not a punishment.

Which brings me to a concern that has steadily moved up the ladder of my priorities: society stereotypes its elders as people who are useless, brainless and sexless as well as a nuisance and a never-ending drain on the public purse. Wrong on all counts, I say, and I say it as often as I have a chance.

First of all, language. In my youth 'old people' were people worthy of respect, likely bearers of wisdom and experience; and 'old things' reflected accumulated worth and proven value. Now it's the opposite. 'Old' means outmoded and replaceable. 'Young' is identical with new, and new is always assumed to be improved. Funny not everyone seems to buy this slogan, though it certainly is regnant. Look what happened to Coca Cola's 'new and improved' formula. 'It's new all right,' said millions of people, 'but we don't think it is improved,' and clamoured

for the old version. Good for them (although I am not a Coca Cola drinker myself).

Second, stop counting years as if they were the clue to what you want to know about a person. Chronological and biological ages are not the same. Ten people, all aged 70, will likely be as different from each other in physical and mental capacity as ten people who are 50 years old. We are all individuals at whatever chronological level we may be.

Of course, there are the averages and they cannot be denied. Still, it depends on how we use them. One could, for instance, say that more people aged 50 have fatal heart attacks than those who have reached three score years and ten. Sure there are differences between young and old. Physical power is on the wane as one gets older, but so is one's urge to acquire more things, which, in turn, is likely to improve the quality of life.

So, naturally, I object to forcible retirement and other discriminatory practices that stereotype us older people as if we were cut of one cloth. We are not.

I will not comment on the stereotype that elders are brainless and sexless; enough books and articles have been written to contradict such common assumptions. When it comes to accusing us of robbing the public purse with our pension cheques, I will say this, however: Sure, let's discuss it, but don't single out the aged for special treatment. Let's talk of everyone who draws a cheque from government and let us see what we find out.

If I seem to be championing a cause that affects me personally—yes, quite so. I admit it, and why not? If I am not for those like me, who will be? I have been careful, of course, not to tell you what my age really is, but I'll say this much: I'm up there all right—chronologically speaking.

*Dr. Plaut is editor of Affirmation. The article is based on a CBC 'Arts National' broadcast.*